

DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING A SYSTEM OF STAFF SUPPORT: SUPERVISION, EVALUATION, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Guidance for Rhode Island's Early Childhood Education Programs

High-quality early childhood education program administrators recognize that program staff are their most valuable resource and design systems of support that:

- Reflect best practices in the field of early childhood education,
- Comply with the educational and structural standards set forth in the Rhode Island Department of Education's Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program standards,
- Comply with other federal, state, or local regulations governing the program,
- Support staff in gaining the knowledge and competencies they need to implement services that result in positive outcomes for children.

Standards 6.9, 6.10, and 6.11 of the Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program standards state that:

(6.9) Each program shall produce an annual professional development plan that:

- a. Is linked to the program's goals,**
- b. Is linked to individual staff professional development plans that are an outgrowth of a performance-based evaluation process for each staff,**
- c. Includes staff and volunteer orientation which addresses review of the program's staff and family handbook(s) and/or policies and procedures,**
- d. Includes a variety of ongoing professional development strategies that reflect effective research-based professional development practices.**

(6.10) Each program shall have a system in place that provides individualized supervision and support to every person employed by the program and volunteers as defined herein.

(6.11) Each program shall have an ongoing staff evaluation process that:

- a. Includes individual self-assessments,**
- b. Includes supervisor feedback based on formal observation,**
- c. Includes an evaluation of family engagement,**
- d. Is linked to the individual's job description,**
- e. Is performance-based,**
- f. Includes a formal supervisor/staff conference conducted at least annually,**
- g. Leads to an annual individual professional development plan addressing**

- competencies referenced in the Educational Program Standards areas of curriculum, child assessment, differentiated teaching and learning, and family engagement,**
- h. Provides results that inform the program’s annual professional development plan.**

The following guidance will assist programs to develop and implement a comprehensive system of staff support:

Identifying Core Competencies

The first step that program leaders must take when designing a comprehensive system of support for early childhood professionals is to identify the core competencies needed by staff to be contributing members of the organization. Information about what administrators, education coordinators, teachers, teacher assistants, and others should know and be able to do serves as the framework for designing the program’s system of support.

To learn more about the early childhood core competencies needed by staff, program leaders should consult resources such as:

- Institutes of Higher Education,
- RIDE Office of Educator Quality and Certification,
- NAEYC and other professional organizations,
- BrightStars, RI’s Quality Rating and Improvement System,
- The Early Childhood section of RIDE’s website (www.ride.ri.gov) for information on the RI Early Childhood Core Competencies and Career Lattice (draft).

RIDE is currently working with state-wide early childhood experts and stakeholders to update and finalize a set of early childhood core competencies, the RI Early Childhood Core Competencies and Career Lattice. This body of work, once completed, will serve as a key document to inform and guide the work of early childhood program administrators, teaching staff, educators, and policy makers.

Core competencies for teaching staff should include the knowledge and competencies teachers need to implement a high-quality, Standards-based educational program in the areas of curriculum, child assessment, differentiated teaching and learning, and family engagement.

Likewise, core competencies for persons serving in supervisory capacities should be identified and include content area expertise, communication, data collection and analysis, reflective supervision, and more.

Core competencies information must be widely communicated throughout the program and appear in documents such as:

- position announcements,
- job descriptions,
- classroom observation protocols,
- supervision protocols,
- evaluation/ performance appraisal systems.

Providing Ongoing Supervision and Support

Standard (6.10) states: Each program shall have a system in place that provides individualized supervision and support to every person employed by the program and volunteers as defined herein.

Programs must design an organizational structure that delineates a supervisor for each staff person within the organization, including directors and administrators. The structure must also designate the staff persons responsible for supervision and oversight of program volunteers.

Typical responsibilities of supervisors include but are not limited to:

- Recruiting, hiring, and orienting staff,
- Evaluating staff performance,
- Supporting staff in their continuous professional growth,
- Monitoring adherence to federal, state, and local standards,
- Overseeing service delivery to ensure adherence to program plans, policies and procedures,
- Communicating with staff, families, and community partners,
- Remaining current with research and best practice in the field and communicating this information to staff,
- Analyzing program data to ascertain program strengths and areas to improve,
- Supporting program-wide family engagement and parent decision-making opportunities.

When designing their supervision system, programs should specify how and when supervision will take place to ensure that supervisors establish regular, ongoing sessions with each staff member they supervise. In some programs, directors may choose to provide supervisors with flexibility to establish individual schedules with their supervisees and adjust that schedule, as needed. In other programs, the director may establish a uniform supervision schedule that all must follow.

Every effort should be made to create a system that includes regular meetings where positive supervisor-supervisee relationships can grow. Programs must avoid creating a system where supervision only occurs when problems arise.

Supervision meetings should be planned events that include time for information sharing, training and clarification of policies and procedures, as well as performance-based feedback. During supervision meetings, communications should be supportive and solution-focused. Meeting should be a place where staff are encouraged to identify professional strengths and challenges. Supervisors should document key decisions and next steps that emerge from these meetings and use this documentation to formulate individual professional development goals and assess staff progress in achieving their goals.

In addition to creating an environment that supports continuous professional growth, programs must also have protocols in place to address situations where staff are not able to perform their duties according to expectations outlined in job descriptions, policies and procedures, and individualized supervision and performance plans.

Education coordinators who supervise teaching staff commonly use their supervision time to support teachers to refine and improve their teaching practice by:

- Performing classroom observations focused on teaching practice,
- Reviewing documents such as lesson plans, children's portfolios, child assessment information, and family communication,
- Reviewing child outcomes data to acknowledge accomplishments and strengthen areas of concern,
- Engaging in individual meetings with teachers to encourage reflective practice.

In high quality Standards-based programs, teachers are also responsible for making positive connections with families, sharing information about children's progress, and connecting families to various opportunities to be involved in their child's education. This important aspect of their work must be included in the supervision process so that supervisors can assess teacher competencies associated with these responsibilities and support their improvement efforts.

When supervisors engage in an ongoing supervision process, they are able to assess staff performance and growth relative to core competencies. This information can then be used to inform staff evaluations and professional development planning.

Staff Evaluation

Standard (6.11) states: Each program shall have an ongoing staff evaluation process that:

- a. Includes individual self-assessments,**
- b. Includes supervisor feedback based on formal observation,**
- c. Includes an evaluation of family engagement,**
- d. Is linked to the individual's job description,**
- e. Is performance-based,**
- f. Includes a formal supervisor/staff conference conducted at least annually,**
- g. Leads to an annual individual professional development plan addressing competencies referenced in the educational program standards areas of curriculum, child assessment, differentiated teaching and learning, and family engagement,**
- h. Provides results that inform the program's annual professional development plan.**

Supervision and staff evaluation are closely linked. Formal staff evaluations that occur at least once each year should be viewed as a culminating activity that summarizes discussions and decisions made during ongoing supervision meetings. As a result, the information that is shared by supervisors during yearly staff evaluation meetings rarely come as a surprise.

Supervisors must apply what they know about the most effective strategies for assessing staff and motivating change and apply this information to the staff evaluation process. Strategies include:

- Ensuring staff understand the expectations of the position prior to the evaluation,
- Using multiple strategies such as classroom observations, document review, and discussions with staff, to collect information for evaluation,
- Ensuring staff participate in the process by sharing their own self-assessments,
- Using evaluation information to identify and build on strengths, not just deficits and needs,
- Communicating results in a way that is respectful and that integrates the perspective of the staff person.

Teachers who have completed RIELS Level II professional development regularly assess their own teaching practice using the RIELS self-assessment tools.¹ They become self-directed learners by using this information to identify strengths and professional development goals, determine the steps they will take to achieve their goals, and chart their progress along the way. This information is organized in a Practitioner Portfolio.

¹ RIELS Level II training was revised in 2006 to include the development of Practitioner Portfolios based on the (1) completion of the self-assessment tools, (2) identification of strengths and needs, (3) goal setting, (4) collection of artifacts

Education coordinators will want to use supervision and staff evaluation as an opportunity for teachers to share their Portfolio information. Teachers and supervisors can then compare notes and work together to identify professional goals that they can mutually agree upon.

During staff evaluation meetings, supervisors and staff work together to design an individualized professional development plan. The information in this plan should outline:

- The professional development goals that have been agreed upon,
- The professional development resources and strategies that will be used to achieve the goal,
- The responsibilities of the supervisor and other program staff in supporting the goals,
- The responsibilities of the staff person,
- Timelines.

Both the RI Early Learning Standards Project and the BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System have developed a format for documenting individualized professional development plans. Programs may want to adopt one of these examples or customize it to meet the needs of the staff in their own program (see attached).

Once completed, the individualized professional development plan becomes the focus of future supervision and staff evaluation meetings where supervisor and staff person regularly revisit the plan, access resources, assess progress, and make adjustments as needed to help ensure success.

Designing a Program-Wide Professional Development Plan

Standard (6.9) states: Each program shall produce an annual professional development plan that:

- a. Is linked to the program's goals,**
- b. Is linked to individual staff professional development plans that are an outgrowth of a performance-based evaluation process for each staff,**
- c. Includes staff and volunteer orientation which addresses review of the program's staff and family handbook(s) and/or policies and procedures,**
- d. Includes a variety of ongoing professional development strategies that reflect effective research-based professional development practices.**

Program-wide professional development plans must include a thoughtful approach to the orientation of new staff.

Orientation

Staff and volunteer orientation should not be viewed as a single event but as a sustained effort over time. In planning for staff orientation, supervisors should ask themselves three questions:

- What does the new employee need to know?

- When does the new employee need to know it?
- How will the new employee obtain the information he/she needs?

Programs should think carefully about the information and supports that teachers need to prepare them for their roles and responsibilities. The initial orientation should focus on program operations and key topics, such as:

- Program philosophy, curriculum framework, and other written plans,
- Regulatory requirements,
- Job description,
- Program policies and procedures,
- Expectations for ethical conduct,
- Acceptable classroom management techniques,
- Child abuse and neglect reporting procedures,
- Health, safety, and emergency procedures,
- Individual needs of the children with whom they will be working.

The following Orientation Checklist can help you to plan and implement an effective orientation system for staff.

Orientation Checklist

____ 1. Provide essential resources and material

- ____ Mission and philosophy
- ____ Organizational chart
- ____ Employment policies
- ____ Written plans, curriculum framework, policies and procedures
- ____ Job description
- ____ Child abuse and neglect reporting procedures
- ____ Health, safety, and emergency procedures
- ____ Code of ethical conduct
- ____ Other

____ 2. Review job description and performance expectations

- ____ 3. Review work schedule, including lunch schedule and procedures signing in and out
- ____ 4. Review payroll policies and procedures
- ____ 5. Review key administrative policies:
 - Requests for leave, holidays, vacation, dress code, conduct and disciplinary standards,
 - time sheet procedures, office security, ordering equipment and supplies, travel
- ____ 6. Introductions to key staff and immediate co-workers
- ____ 7. Schedule and purpose of standard meetings
- ____ 8. Tour of building and facilities
- ____ 9. Demonstrate use of equipment: office computer and printer, phone, fax, copier, voice mail, e-mail, other project software
- ____ 10. Overview of initial job assignments
- ____ 11. Schedule upcoming trainings
- ____ 12. _____
- ____ 13. _____

The months following a new hire typically entail intensive supervision and frequent supervisor-supervisee meetings to:

- provide individualized training and support,
- clarify policy and procedure,
- observe teaching practice, provide feedback, and establish initial professional development goals.

Many programs have instituted a mentoring system as a component of orientation. In this way, newly hired teaching staff benefit from peer support and access to seasoned early childhood professionals within the program who can respond to day-to-day questions, role-model best practice, and support the individual in acclimating to the program culture.

Program –wide Professional Development Plans

Programs must use information from individual professional development plans and a comprehensive program self-assessment to design a program-wide professional development plan.

Individual professional development plans contain a wealth of information and serve as an important data source to inform the development of a program-wide professional development plan. The information in individual plans, once aggregated and analyzed, often reveals:

- common professional development needs across the program that can best be met in group settings,
- professional development needs common to specific segments of the program,
- unique professional development needs of individuals or small groups of staff.

In addition, programs must take stock of the professional development needs that emerge from the comprehensive program self-assessment and use both of these data sources to design the final plan.

The following example demonstrates how both data sources are used to inform this planning process:

- In Program X,Y,Z , a review and analysis of child outcome data during the comprehensive program self-assessment reveals that children are not progressing in the areas of Math and Science as well as expected.
- A review and analysis of individualized professional development plans reveals that a large majority of teachers want to improve their competencies in the area of teaching and facilitating, and more specifically, in the area of instructional supports.
- Individualized professional development plans also show that a large segment of the teacher population want to learn new strategies for supporting children's learning in the areas of Math and Science.

With this information in hand, program leaders can ask themselves the following questions:

- Will our child outcome data improve if teachers learn new teaching strategies focused on math and science?
- Do teachers need to learn how to compare their lesson plans with the domains and learning goals of the RI Early Learning Standards to identify and fill gaps? If they learn to do this, will Math and Science outcomes improve?
- If teachers improve their skills and competencies in the area of instructional supports, are outcomes for children likely to increase in the areas of Math and Science?

The answer to these types of questions will provide program administrators the information they can use to begin to design their program-wide professional development plan.

The next step for program leaders is to apply their knowledge of (1) the principles of adult learning, (2) research-based professional development strategies, (3) theory of change, and (4) the diverse learning styles of staff in their program, to develop or identify meaningful professional development opportunities that will support staff in gaining new levels of competency in targeted areas.

Administrators should take stock of the professional development resources, both internal and external, that are available to the program. Since program resources are not unlimited, programs should determine how they can best allocate resources to meet the most pressing professional development needs of the program.

Programs should integrate a wide range of cost-effective, research-based professional development strategies into their plan. When matching strategies to need, administrators should take the following into consideration:

- Learning outcomes,
- Internal and external resources available to the program,
- Group size,
- Learning styles of staff.

Professional development strategies might include:

- Observation and feedback,
- Individual reflection,
- Mentoring and coaching,
- Supervisor demonstration,
- Peer observations,
- Mentor teacher/mentor classroom visits,
- Lesson study (teacher selects a Standard, assesses children's developmental level, plans and implements a lesson, discusses and analyzes the process with a supervisor),
- Workshops/Trainings,
- Technical assistance from outside consultants,
- Book study,
- Portfolio development and reflective journaling,
- Focused discussions during staff meetings,
- Independent research,
- Mentoring others,
- Presentation of information by staff to colleagues

Directors and administrators who use program data to identify professional development needs and then use their knowledge of effective professional development strategies and the learning styles of staff to address those needs, will formulate a meaningful, outcome-focused professional development plan tied to core competencies and outcomes for children.

Resources:

- *Brightstars, RI's Quality Rating and Improvement System, www.brightstars.org*
- *Building Teachers' Capacity for Success, Pete Hall and Alisa Simeral, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, VA, 2008*
- *Moving Ahead Competency-Based Training Program, <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov>*
- *National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria, 2005*
- *RI Early Learning Standards Level II Professional Development: Implementing a Standards-Based Program*
- *RI Early Learning Standards Level III Professional Development: The Administrator's Role in Implementing a Standards-Based Program*
- *SOLAR Skill Profile for Directors, Managers, and Supervisors, Developed by the Education Development Center, Inc. under the Innovation and Improvement Project grant, ACF, US HHS*

The Rhode Island Early Learning Standards

Name: _____

Date: _____

Professional Development Goals

GOAL:		
Strategies	Time Frame	Progress

GOAL:		
Strategies	Time Frame	Progress

Date I will evaluate progress and reassess goals: _____

Sample Individual Professional Development Plan Template

Name: _____

Date Plan Completed: _____

Long Term Objective(s): Complete at least 12 credit hours of college coursework in Early Childhood/Child Development

Goal 1: Complete a 3 credit course in 2010

Action Steps	Resources	Time Frame	Progress
-Find out information about available courses at community college: cost of course(s), schedule, credits I will earn, contact person for area of study, enrollment process -Find out whether any trainings or professional development courses I have taken or plan to take can transfer as credit -Find out if place of employment offers incentives for completing coursework or will offer schedule flexibility to allow completion of coursework - Enroll in course	-Community college - Community agencies which offer trainings for college credits -Previous college-level coursework that will transfer -Financial aid programs	3/1/10 – 12/31/10	Enrolled in child development course at community college-8/2010